SLAM

MAGAZINE

exploring origin in arts, dialogue, and customs

ARTS: HISTORY OF R&B, REDEFINING THE POWER OF ART
DIALOGUE: THE STATEMENT OF FASHION, DEBUNKING THE "SASSY BLACK FRIEND" STEREOTYPE
CUSTOMS: BEHIND THE KICKS, CULTURAL LOOKBOOK

ISSUE 1 WINTER 2021

our mission

our mission

SLAM Magazine's goal is to engage our viewers with the unique culture of all communities by exploring their arts, customs, and conversations. We strive to emphasize the creativity and uniqueness that lives within artistic, ethnic, social, and all other cultures by valuing inclusivity and proper representation of these groups which are cornerstones of our identity and purpose. We hope to build a culture at MVHS that is aware of and celebrates the impact of cultural diversity. We're so happy to have you here and thank you for your support!

- SLAM Magazine

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introducing SLAM

Who is SLAM

From *Peek*, to *Flair*, to *Pike*, our magazine finally embraced its identity when it was officially named *SLAM*. Although "slam" is commonly defined as banging something noisily, we choose to interpret it differently and extract the power and passion that roots our vision for the present and future of our magazine. Instead of shutting the door closed, we want to slam them open for creativity, diversity, community, and the beauty of culture to transpire our message of cultural appreciation to as many people as possible. We are in our very first year with *SLAM Magazine,* a student-run publication and Mountain View High School club. As a cultural magazine, we explore the arts, customs, and conversations that reside in different communities in hopes of spreading awareness about these influences that shape our daily lives and for our readers to appreciate and celebrate this diversity. We believe this is a message that is essential to spread because we are all members of a global community which entails that our membership should be active in seeking beyond our comfortable familiarities and borders. To do this, *SLAM* encourages discussion and helps create those conversations by interacting with the student body the best we can.

Our Journey

In the summer of 2020 during quarantine, founder and Club President Krissy Koh wanted to use her passion for writing to speak to her peers and challenge them as well. She first explored the message of self expression and finding individuality however, Koh felt that the theme of culture and its integrity to uniqueness and authenticity, was the one she and the rest of *SLAM* could truly stand behind. Since October of 2020, we have been meeting weekly over Zoom due to the stay-at-home regulations. Although the distance has presented its challenges, it has also given us more initiative to bond with each other and create friendships beyond publishing a magazine together. As of February 5th, we have released our very first issue and can not wait to continue this journey to reaching more and more students.

LAYOUT BY JESSICA GAO

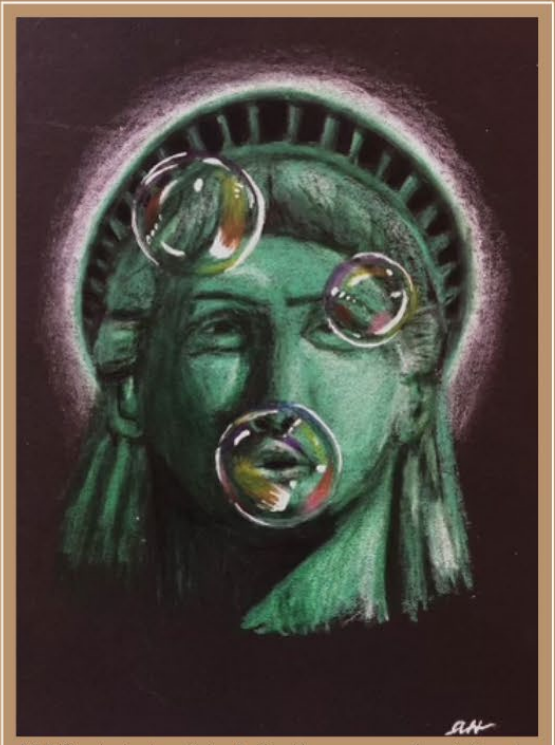
ARTS

ARTS

REDEFINING THE POWER OF ART

BY SBEYDE HERRERA GONZALEZ & MIRANDA HERNANDEZ TEODORO

DESIGN BY TIZITA SCHUMACHER



MVHS student artist, Aoife Hernon, used painting to "represent the fragility of the American dream."

Gen Z is a generation unlike others because its unique celebration of diversity and attention to race and morality is a discernible characteristic that has led to substantial change in society. During this past election, younger demographics increased voter turnout, making it the highest in over a century. Gen Z is arguably the most involved generation in history thanks to the large exposure to media which increases awareness of the evolving culture of this global community. Some of the main values Gen Z includes is self expression and creativity because it gives them a sense of freedom and roots the arts as an essential outlet to these principles. The knowledge of worldwide current events distinguishes Gen Z art from other forms due to its ability to include, advocate, and teach about these topics in innovative ways.

Gen Z art continues to show its support for issues and channels this through their canvases with a variety of meaningful colors that further express concerns for these matters. The appreciation for all types of diversity welcomes change and takes action upon injustices for all cultures and people. These artists create powerful pieces that represent the issues in many different communities. This form of art stands out because this generation has redefined creativity and has stepped away from traditional art by incorporating technology and not being afraid to express their concerns for the underrepresented groups in their community. The use of technology is not only revolutionary to the art world, but vastly expands the power art holds.

Recently, protests like the Black Lives Matter movement and the ongoing pandemic have created a sense of distress and affected many communities. These stressors have increased anxiety and a decline in mental health. The University College of London completed a study showing people who spent at least 30 minutes a day engaging in some artistic hobby reported lower rates of depression and anxiety, demonstrating that art and creativity in general have helped improve mental health because it allows for a temporary escape from harsh realities. Additionally, art is a way to feel connected with your surroundings and can potentially make one feel more accepting or comfortable in their current situation. Gen Z artists are mobile and adaptive; they are no longer statically waiting for artistic pieces to be made — they make it happen and they make it relevant. With the power of the Internet and platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, artists are now provided some of the best tools that allow young people to reach out to a community, receive tips and feedback, and be granted a space to even possibly receive commissions. It means art digitalization is constantly improving and becoming more and more accessible. As it has continued to grow, artists have found ways to expand and equip these platforms into supporting artists reaching their goal, in some cases using hashtags like #ArtistsSupportArtists, #DrawthisYourStyle, and even more recently promoting advocacy.

Shirien Damra knew that when she created work attributed to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Abery, that their story needed to be told. The tragedy would be remembered as well as the beauty their lives stood for. This represents how the effect of renewed motivation propels a newer generation into action. It stands that art is a medium which seeks to inform not only of Black Lives Matter — it rolls into gender equality, climate, and other global issues that are slowly being uncovered through art and encourages artists to continue the self imposed mission of communicating the hopes and dreams of the future they wish to see. Damra says, “Art is a tool. It's not the end. It’s a means to an end, not an end in itself. Ultimately, the real work comes when we all come together."

HISTORY OF R&B

BY SBEYDE HERRERA GONZALEZ

DESGIN AND ART BY NATALIE LO

R&B music is said to be one of the most popular genres of music today, yet its culture-filled history and meaning is still largely hidden to most people.

R&B, or rhythm and blues, is a genre of music that combines jazz with elements of pop, soul, hip hop, and electronic music. Between the end of World War II (1945) and the early 1960s, R&B arose deriving from jazz, blues, and gospel music. Since its birth, R&B has challenged traditional structures and evolved with innovative sounds that first captivated the young Black community. The strong beat and soulful singing separated itself from other genres and caught the ears of many.

The 90s — the golden age of R&B — was a time in which R&B began to convert into what we hear today with new and diverse faces and voices appearing to be rising on the charts. Like the origins of the genre, many up and coming R&B artists were Black and so this era brought success to many young artists on the path to redefine R&B such as Usher, D'Angelo, Mary J. Blige, and Destiny's Child who then paved the way for artists we love today like Beyonce, Rihanna, and Justin Timberlake. The R&B in the 2000s was not drastically different from the 90s, however, along with new icons, you can notice the shift from jazz to hip hop during this time.

Modern R&B, also known as contemporary and alternative R&B, separates itself from previous identities because of the addition of electronics, making it more related to hip-hop. "Cry Together" by The O'Jays, creates a sound more familiar to the soft and smooth rhythm of jazz and soul, whereas a more recent R&B song like, SZA's "Good Days" produces an electronic sound coming from a variety of resources which produces a flexible, strong, steady beat. The 2000s creates an alternative stylistic sound, which includes an emphasis on beats and radical rhythm changes in addition to the new sounds.

The difference in audience members further distinguishes R&B from contemporary R&B because it originally targeted mainly young African Americans, however that has now been expanded and made more diverse. New audiences could have been attracted to the advocacy that was introduced in lyrics as R&B became seen as more than just "a bunch of love songs".

Popular contemporary R&B artist, Beyonce, wrote and sang a song titled "Black Parade", a song about her African roots and having to face injustices as a Black American. She writes, "Put your fists up in the air, show Black love. Motherland drip on me" and "Hold my hands, we gon' pray together. Lay down, face down in the gravel, wearing' all attire white to the funeral. Black love, we gon' stay together". Both lyrics focus on the pride that comes with being of African descent, but also the difficulties faced. Contemporary R&B can be used to bring emphasis to problems in the world and even individual stories which is also evident in Victoria Monet and Ariana Grande's song titled "Better days", a piece about the ongoing struggle with police brutality. They write, "Baby, there's a war right outside our window (Don't you hear the people fighting for their lives?) and "So how we gonna stop the violence, stop the hurting? Stop the hatred, stop the murders. We're all human, that's for certain." They focus on presenting the issue as it is, but take an optimistic approach while "hoping for better days." Having notable artists speak out publicly on media about the issue of police brutality has an effect on the listeners point of view and are reminded of the tragic reality.

The most popular songs and artists of contemporary R&B have shown their support for issues in society by doing what they do best, making music; it has become a new outlet for expressing the emotions attached to injustices and continues to serve as a channel for communication. Even with certain songs focusing on hardship, R&B has the ability to raise spirits and enlighten one's mood. The R&B we know and love today was not at all what it was before, from different lyrical perspectives to the addition of electronic music and stronger beats. The change in R&B reflects the change in time and having more artists willing to branch out and leave the old sounds in order to create something modern has never failed to entertain and satisfy its growing audience.

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LAYOUT BY JESSICA GAO

DIALOGUE

BY ALLISON NGUYEN

DESIGNED BY LILAH HORNSTEIN

AN IMMIGRANT'S VIEW OF SYSTEMIC RACISM

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLISON NGUYEN

The Letter to the Editor series in SLAM Magazine gives the opportunity to any Mountain View High School student who wants to voice an opinion on any issue they wish to bring attention to.

I rarely fight with my mother. Being raised in a Vietnamese immigrant home means that you always defer to parental authority and raising your voice is a fatal mistake. But it just so happens that my mom can't think unless she's yelling and I am a natural-born debater.

This story begins in 1979. My mom, her three brothers, and her mother — my grandmother — arrived in America "fresh off the boat" from a refugee camp. From there, their lives exemplified the perfect American Dream story: single mom working three jobs to support her kids, each child growing to be working professionals — two of them dentists — settling to raise families in wealthy areas with privileged lives, and Grandma retiring in Huntington Beach. America seemed like the place where anyone could achieve anything, even a Vietnamese immigrant family with nothing. But it isn't, and my mom and I couldn't seem to agree on that.

At the height of the Black Lives Matter protests, I sat at the dining table with my sister trying to convince my mother that American institutions are oppressive to Black people. I thought that my mother, of all people, would be able to empathize with poor people of color struggling to succeed in America, but she had been an American for over 40 years and already adopted American values, including what writer Robert Kohls defined as "personal control over your environment". Kohls identified 13 fundamental American values that govern their lives, the aforementioned being the ability to exert total control over one's socioeconomic environment. Despite Kohls defining them as values, my mother seemed to understand it as a fact, an inherent ability of anyone on American soil. As we yelled back and forth, it became clear that no matter how many statistics, testimonies, and racist institutions I proposed, my mother's success story was the only proof she needed that people can overcome any obstacle in America, even murderous police.

It didn't help that most of her personal experience with Black people was with people she considered bad folk. A majority of her tenants were Black women on welfare, one a single mother of five from different marriages and another that purposely took low wage jobs to stay on welfare. "Why are they like that?" my mother asks, "My mom was single too. We were on welfare too." Well, what about welfare traps, Ma? What about the cycle of poverty? What about the reality that your skin color won't let you get a job with a liveable wage, so you have to purposefully rely on welfare? She had already dealt with what oppressed people deal with everyday, and her appreciation of her own hard work prevented her from accepting that she had less obstacles in the first place.

In the end, we agreed to disagree. I still value being able to control my environment; without that principle, you begin to feel very helpless. But I draw the line at any of Kohls' values when they start to encroach on my ability to empathize. My mom and I will never know what it's like to be a Black person in America, even if we feel the effects of racism to some degree. It's also true that it's because of her value of control that my mom can deny the existence of such systemic oppression. In spite of this, by valuing your own control, you give yourself hope that you can exert that control. This value lends itself to ignorance, but it also pushes people like me to confront their tiger mom about people dying in the streets. To march and riot against police. To face rubber bullets and tear gas. To scare the president into his bunker. To exert enough control that we can change our country.

finding your genes

ARTICLE BY AMELIA KLINGBERG

DESIGN BY JESSICA GAO

For two decades, genealogy tests have been offered to the public as a way to learn about your close relatives, the specifics of your origin, and even if you are at risk for certain genetic diseases. Since then, more than 26 million people have taken a genealogy test and in 2019, the MIT Technology review predicted that about 100 million people will have taken one in 2021.

Malena Roper, a junior at Mountain View High School, said she took a genealogy test because “I kinda knew where I was from, but the specifics seemed interesting to me and the exact percentages that you can’t find out from asking.” Roper said she used Ancestry.com to order the genealogy test and was sent a kit where she got a tube and spit into it. She then sent the box back and was able to see the results on their website about a week later.

She said that it was really interesting to see the results — specifically the new things she learned, the distribution of her ethnicities, and knowing that she wasn’t at risk for some genetic diseases. “I knew that I was going to be some kind of Peruvian, some kind of Middle Eastern, and some kind of European. But I wasn’t really sure the part of Europe I was from.” Roper’s results showed traces from England and parts of Germany which were surprising for her. “I also got results like I'm a small part Native American, I never knew these things before so that was different.”

Tiffany Tran, also a junior, took a genealogy test in 2018. Tran is adopted, and while knowing her biological parents, she wanted to get a real view of her genetics. The process of taking the test and seeing the results was the same for Tran as it was for Roper. Before taking the test, Tran already had a pretty clear view of her genetics from knowing that her biological mom is white and that her biological dad is Mexican. The actual results were what she expected, but it was still interesting to see the actual amounts of each. She thought her ancestry from Mexico would be a much smaller percentage than what it actually is. “The results didn’t have any high numbers [and it turned out] I was a lot of different things but most of it was from Spain and Mexico. There was a little Ireland, Scotland, England and Portuguese,” she explained. Even with this new knowledge, Tran felt it didn’t significantly impact her because “it didn’t change my view on how I am as a person. It didn’t change how I saw my family,” Tran said.

Both Tran and Roper would recommend that if people have the chance, they should take a genealogy test because they both found it interesting to see the specifics of their origin. Through Tran and Roper’s experiences, genealogy has proven itself to help one connect with one’s family and solidify one’s identity.

BY KRISSY KOH

ABLEISM: A HANDCUFF ON EQUALITY

WHY IS ABLEISM HARMFUL?

Dis-ability. It's often a word surrounded with bad connotations and taboo conversation — a topic that is uncomfortable to speak about and avoided. According to Merriam Webster, it's one that's synonymous with the words "negative", "dysfunctional", "harm", "liability", and "weakness". However this promotes stigma and ableism that is commonly looked over in our society. Ableism is discrimination and prejudice that assumes a lesser status of someone because of a disability. It is a social construct that favors able-bodied people and restricts opportunity for people with disabilities because of unequal accessibility and lack of acceptance. Ableism weighs someone's worth based on their capabilities and sadly, is all too real and prevalent in our society.

Why is Ableism Harmful?

Many people with disabilities have expressed that society acts as larger hindrance to them than their actual physical or mental disability does because discrimination is most harmful. In an individualistic society, the support needed of some people with disabilities are hardly ever given and disabilities are seen as an issue or a problem that either needs to be fixed in an individual, or eradicated from society. In other cases, disability is seen as a flaw and it is a misconception that able-bodied people should take pity on these people. These ideas create a stigma that people with disabilities are entirely incapable and depend on an able-bodied saviour to rescue them. While there are adjustments needed for certain disabilities to provide equal opportunity, that is not an excuse for alienation or estrangement of those people.

Common assumptions circulate in society that suggest students with 504s are mal-intentioned or lying to cut corners which only reiterates the culture of ableism. Ava Cairns, a senior at Mountain View High School, was diagnosed in the first grade with a visual processing learning disability in which she now has a 504 plan which gives her limited extra time on tests. When it comes to other aspects of school like homework, Cairns explains that she does not get any accommodations and notes, "I want it to stay that way because the work needs to come from me and 504s shouldn't be looked at as extra help. It should be looked at as an accommodation because that's what it is, at least for me." Cairns emphasizes that her plan simply gives her accommodation in order to elucidate the conditions of her 504 and rectify the misconceptions made.

The voices of people with disabilities are often run over and muted by people who disregard their experiences, even when they have never spent a day in the shoes of a person with disabilities and have no insight into how they're treated differently. This further promotes an ableist society because it blocks progressive conversations from taking place when able bodied people already take the most power.

ABLEISM IN OUR SOCIETY

Ableism in Our Society

Ableist actions are commonly overlooked and easily slip over our minds when we're uneducated and unaware. In bathrooms, larger handicap stalls are specifically marked however it rarely prevents able-bodied people from using them. It should be our initiative to recognize that we don't need them and should leave them vacant for those who do because these stalls aren't created so that we can enjoy the luxury of more space. Similarly, the blue paint that lines handicap parking spaces is not a request for reservation; they should never, in any case, be taken by those who do not need them.

Ableism is also visible in the media especially through misrepresentation and lack of such. Pop music singer, Sia, is directing a movie titled Music, which follows a nonverbal girl with autism however this character is played by Maddie Ziegler, a neurotypical actress. Sia claims to have been working with the organization Autism Speaks throughout the production of the movie however according to the Washington Post, "Autism Speaks has run high-profile advertising and fundraising campaigns suggesting that autism is a malevolent force that afflicts families and makes parents miserable." This is a prime example of ableism in the media because having neurotypical actors portray someone with autism simply provides them another role and opportunity to profit while those with real disabilities have to face the discrimination and hardships linked because of society. This was a missed opportunity for real representation that is far overdue.

For a MVHS senior who has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), getting on the same page with teachers on her needs and rights to accommodations was sometimes a struggle, even when she had a 504 plan which legally allowed her to receive extra time on most assignments and tests.

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

COMBATING ABLEISM THE MVHS COMMUNITY

After requesting extended deadlines, she was given responses like "No, you need to complete it at the same time as other students" on multiple occasions and some teachers were just "straight up rude". This prompted her decision to switch to an IEP after hearing from peers that the addition of a learning skills class made more teachers respect her needs which she felt previously devoid from. She believes that this may have stemmed from a place of suspicion as common misconceptions that were previously explained by Cairns could have easily turned into prejudices.

The MVHS Community

While ableism is present in many communities, Ms. Esparza, a MVHS teacher in the special education department for the last 12 years, applauds MVHS and says "I really find that our special ed department is there for the kids first, [teachers] second… and so we all work as a team." Esparaza mainly teaches students on the autism spectrum and explains that the curriculum in the Life Skills program is specifically designed in which it allows her and other teachers, with students who have moderate to severe disabilities, more flexibility whereas other A-G courses require stricter scheduling. The Life Skills program incorporates opportunities to interact in job settings and teach important, everyday skills. In addition, Esparza mentions that, "Our department is a little magical because [the teachers] work so well together, we are all best friends." This close-knit community allows for easy communication which always results in better education for the students.

Outside of the classroom setting, MVHS is also successful in being inclusive to the community of students with disabilities through one of the largest clubs at school — Spartan Buddies with almost 180 participants. Club President, Sasha Keck, explains they have made huge progress on their mission to "create friendships between students with and without disabilities to try and build a more inclusive environment at school" by meeting every week, currently through Zoom, which provides a welcoming atmosphere for fostering friendships.

Mr. Quillinan, the club advisor and a teacher in the special education department, describes Spartan Buddies' members to be "the most dedicated students" who continue to show up to become a first true friend to students with moderate to severe disabilities. "The club is the best answer that we have to breaking down barriers."

MVHS provides IEPs and 504 plans for students that would benefit with adjustment to their academic situation. These programs are personalized to the students' needs and Cairns believes that without them, "the pace of the class would be disjointed and not as unified because students who need 504s would fall behind while those who are naturally faster would have to slow down." She continues and says, "A 504 allows me to have the extra time but not a person who doesn't need it."

Combating Ableism

With the normalization of ableism in our society, awareness, education, and having open ears as able-bodied people is the prime way we can change the negative stigma and prejudices. Many people with disabilities have shared their personal stories online so we're just one Google search away from hearing personal accounts and becoming more educated and a step closer to allyship. It's easy to disassociate ourselves with issues that may not affect us but merely standing by does equal harm to the disabled community, and helping through educating ourselves, has never been easier.

Spartan Buddies also illustrates and models one of the best ways to combat ableism which is through "bridging the divide between students with disabilities and those without through friendship." Keck continues to say "people are more likely to be interested in bringing awareness to issues that their friends are facing than they are if they're just students across the campus that they don't really talk to," which naturally fights against the parasite of stigma that feeds on prejudice and only accepting what society considers "normal".

The vice president of Spartan Buddies, Eliana Katz, recognizes that we all have biases, ones were not even aware of that exist for many reasons however, she notes that it is never an excuse to discriminate and that everyone should be looked at with equal respect. Although a time without ableism feels far from the present, making small steps towards individual growth will exponentially sprout into inclusive communities and a society that doesn't base one's value on capability but instead, appreciates the person that comes first in everyone.

DESIGNED BY LILAH HORNSTEIN

FEMINISM

BY MIRANDA HERNANDEZ
DESIGN BY TIZITA SCHUMACHER

1848: Seneca Falls Convention
The First Wave of Feminism started with a Convention called by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott to discuss "the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women," a reunion that demanded equality.

1907-1981: Eugenic
While white women finally won the right to take ownership of their own bodies through legalized birth control prevention (1960), women of color fell under the 1907 Compulsory Sterilization meaning they were forcefully or even unknowingly sterilized until 1981 which was the last recorded case nationwide although it'd been banned in 1960.

1964: Title VII
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and nationality. This was both a win for Civil Rights and women as the work being done to prevent further oppression was unlike any other in that time.

2006: #MeToo
It began with Tarana Burke's "me too" on Myspace which fomented "empowerment through empathy" among sexually assaulted women of color. In 2017 Alyssa Milano renewed this act in order "to give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

2017: Women's March:
In order to protest the existing administrations' threatening policies towards women's rights, immigration reforms, healthcare reform, reproductive rights, the environment, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, freedom of religion, and workers' rights and tolerance, over 500,000 people united in Washington.

DANIELA SHAPIRO

ARUSHI SINGH

While there may be many different interpretations of the word feminism, its true value stems from the overarching fight for equity. It is not intended to demean or forcefully ingrain a perspective, but instead to encourage the necessary conversation to understand privilege. As feminism's definition has changed over the course of history, the Women's Empowerment Club and GenShe at Mountain High School give insight into what contemporary feminism is all about. While the Bay Area is known to be one of the most diverse settings, prejudices are still integrated in society which motivated Daniela Shapiro Ortiz, Club President of the Women's Empowerment Club, to be one of the first to bring feminism to MVHS. "In the beginning there were a lot of people and even some of my friends who came up and said 'why would we join, you're just man hating'," Shapiro recounts, marking the backlash and dangerous ignorance that appeared to be the norm in society. Situations such as, "In freshman year, we were in bio class and these four guys and I were at the back of the classroom and someone said, 'She's getting gangbanged' and I was like, 'Excuse me?'" Casual remarks like these are obviously inappropriate for a class setting and it reveals the comfort and normalization of injustices towards women, but that wasn't it for Shapiro. In her AP Computer Science class, she felt the pressures of prejudice and bias silence her as the only girl which speaks to the progress yet to be made. Similarly stands the Women's Empowerment Club which focuses on educating students on feminism on a global scale which includes "women mutilations in Africa, that [are] passed off as cultural", domestic violence, wage gap, and understanding exploited costs of menstrual necessities.

GenShe's President, Arushi Singh, started a chapter with hopes of, "leveling the playing field." Singh had previously noted disparities between representation of genders across business oriented fields which encouraged her to, "extend [opportunities] to as many people as possible." In GenShe, girls and nonbinary people are provided space to network and grow and instill confidence which they gain through active participation through opportunities to take charge in interests and discover new passions.

Although holding different focus points, both Shapiro-Ortiz and Singh agree there is no one defining movement. Women continue to persevere through the unifying value of feminism: the uncompromising fight for equality through civil discussions. That being said, what once started as a revolution for voting rights, has evolved into progressive women of color like Alexandra Ocasio Cortez and fellow colleagues, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Ayanna Pressley (dubbed The Squad), to help return the representation for powerful women long lost in time.

PHOTOS BY AMELIA KOPP

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LAYOUT BY JESSICA GAO

customs
customs
customs

The Birth of Sneaker Culture, The Evolution of Sneaker Culture, Sneaker Reselling, The Sentimentality of Sneakers

BY KRISSY KOH

DESIGN AND ART BY NATALIE LO

PHOTOS BY F. FINCH

Looking at every high school today, you'll see a pool of Vans' skater silhouettes, three iconic Adidas stripes, and Nike swooshes dominating over the sneaker selection on the feets of young groups. These brands, along with Converse and Jordan, are pioneers of sneaker culture whose rich history plays a pervasive role in students' flair.

The Birth of Sneaker Culture

Sneaker culture in America first dates back to the rise of athletic shoes in the 1970s when Adidas shoes were top sellers, but truly exploded in the 1980s when Nike secured a brand deal with basketball star, Michael Jordan, thus birthing other subsets like sneakerhead culture and sneaker selling culture.

However athletic shoes, in this context defined as rubber sole shoes, were first manufactured around the 1890s when Keds were invented and Converse followed soon after in 1917 when Chuck Taylor's were spotted in the courts of the NBA. Since then, the demand and public desire for athletic shoes never ceased.

Jordan can be seen as a founding father to sneaker culture and it's quite impossible to talk about sneakers without mentioning him and his brand. Currently, there are 35 different silhouettes of Jordans, the most loved including the 1s, 3s, 4s, and 11s. Another icon in sneaker culture is rapper, Kanye West, who is most famous for his deal with Adidas creating the Yeezy brand which was a "monumental moment in sneaker history" according to Mountain View High School junior, Dylan Pegarido, but first explored a line with Nike. Yeezy's now have around ten shapes and became popular in 2007 but are still loved for their unique shape and comfortability. West changed sneaker culture with this brand and is one of the key figures that contributed in making sneakers a part of high fashion.

The Evolution of Sneaker Culture

The global market for sneakers reaches near $100 billion today which proves its immense spread and it has greatly influenced pop culture in aspects of fashion, sports, and music.

Since Converse, that were first worn on NBA courts, to Jordans and countless models of other athletic shoes, the changes to the poster face of sneakers is undeniably noticeable. Chuck Taylors have typical rubber soles and the basis of the shoe is made of a canvas material with a slim silhouette. Although high tops have remained a popular model, the bulkiness and sometimes chunky foundation of sneakers have become the new style.

Since its birth, sneaker culture has impacted pop fashion, music, and sports and continues to do so today. Rap is the most assimilated music genre and having a proper pair of shoes on is important in the rap community. Sneakers have even been the main focus in lyrics in songs from "My Adidas" by Run-DMC which was released in 1986 to more recently in 2007 with "Classic" by Kanye West.

Athleisure fashion arose once sneakers changed everyday and celebrity fashion to gear towards more casual and comfortable looks while still incorporating taste with this balance of not too "bummy", but not too high end. Sneakers are a way for people to dress up and dress down an outfit and this style is extremely common today.

Even with these changes, people recognize that the character of sneakers remains the same. Pegarido says "sneakers are more about how you use them than how it looks." He recognizes that the versatility of these shoes is a characteristic that resides in every model. Luis Roque, a sophomore, noted that he values the story behind each sneaker and specifically pointed out the Jordan Flu Games, which earned its name when Michael Jordan played in them while he was ill however still pulled together a win during the 1997 NBA Finals. Arnav Bindra, a senior at Mission San Jose High School, was first attracted to sneakers because of the technology in basketball shoes and he notes that, "It's like a confidence boost when you have the best pair of shoes on the court", and this remains today.

The Nike MAG: one of the many sneakers in Arnav Bindra's collection, released in 2011 the Back to the Furture Part II movie.

Sneaker Reselling

When the buzz around sneakers spiked, the reselling business hatched in the late 90's but had rapidly evolved over the past few decades, thanks to media outlets and digital payment. Before this, in person "meet-ups" were common where resellers would meet with potential buyers and negotiate for prices. Without reselling, buyers would have to wait in never-ending lines, and sometimes camp out overnight in front of stores to try to get their hands on the new drop. Craigslist and eBay were the first sites for online reselling which then incorporated social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram. However, consignment stores like Flight Club and bigger online sites like StockX were game changers to this market.

The creation and popularization of StockX, and websites alike, allow anyone to send in sneakers that are bidded on once verified for their authenticity. Bindra explains the revolution to reselling through this website and describes StockX as "the stock market for sneakers". "It gives all of the data whether it's past high sale shoes or recent sales so when I buy a shoe, the first thing I do is look at StockX to see what the market looks like." Fleeting trends dictate the value of shoes and are carefully watched by resellers. At a time, just a few pairs are the best selling on websites for bidding which is profitable when they're on trend but once the hype has passed, the value greatly decreases. This pattern is clear when Yeezy's would easily resell for $600 to $1000 when they were a fashion trend but now as the demand has fallen, they're priced around $300 while Nike and Jordan have reclaimed the top spot.

Additionally, sneakers with collaborations with rappers like Travis Scott or brands like Off-White instantly are raised in value and reach thousands of dollars. Resell value for these shoes often double, or even triple, the retail cost which makes sneakers more exclusive over others which adds to the desire. Bindra says, "Things just flip flop in the sneaker industry based on artists or new fashion trends", which explains the high prices and fluctuating demand for certain shoes.

Reselling has expanded the doors to even young students who open Instagram or Facebook stores where users can either meet up or pay virtually. Roque created his Instagram shop, kicksfromtheview, in June of 2020 and since then has sold over 75 pairs and continues to sell now. For sellers like Bindra, consignment has allowed him to buy large quantities of shoes then ship them to consignment stores like Stadium Goods, Flight Club, and Urban Necessities in loads of 200 to 300 pairs while they take ten to 20 percent. Since his sophomore year, he has been building up capital from "the ground up" and in 2019, reached $900,000 in sales and in 2020, he made an astounding $2.2 million in sales.

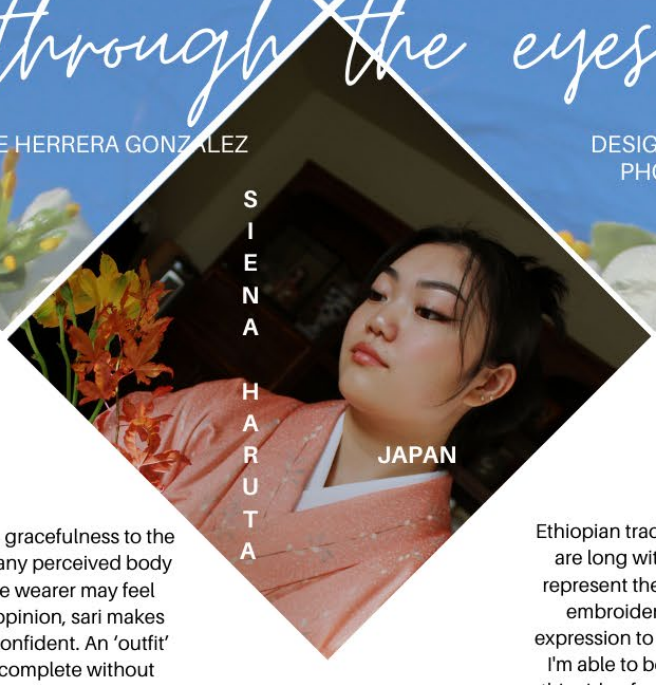
The Sentimentality of Sneakers

The history behind sneakers is one that is well known and deeply appreciated by sneakerheads, or those who are familiar with the culture and collect these shoes. Sneakers often give their wearers a sense of confidence walking down the street and allow them to express their individual flair therefore the significance of these shoes becomes personal. Others find sentimental value with birth year sneakers, shoes that were released in the same year they were born, to elicit a sense that the shoes are just as old as its owner. Pegarido points out that "sneakers are art" and the sneaker community shares these feelings and a common appreciation and love for the culture whether they have pursued a business through it or are just loyal fans.

culture through the eyes of fashion

BY: SBEYDE HERRERA GONZALEZ

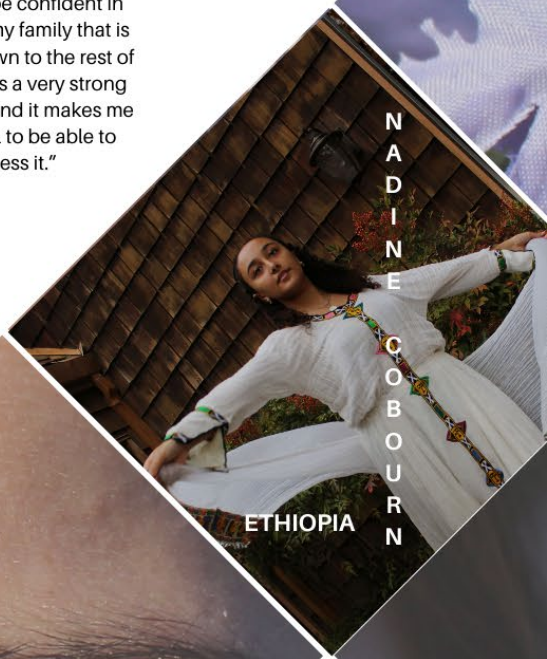
DESIGNED BY LILAH HORNSTEIN
PHOTOS BY AVNI SARDANA



"The sari renders a gracefulness to the wearer and hides any perceived body imperfections the wearer may feel they have. In my opinion, sari makes the wearer more confident. An 'outfit' would never be complete without jewelry, something my culture and family both value. I feel honored that I will get to share this centuries-old, sartorial tradition of all my female ancestors when I wear my first sari and madisar."

Japanese kimonos hold memories and traditions and are worn for special events, like weddings, tea parties, ceremonies, new years, and others. "Dressing in kimonos is something so special to me because looking at everyone wearing beautiful clothing is heartwarming and truly a unique experience. My grandmother taught me the value of kimonos and has given me the honor of wearing them."
- Seina Haruta

Ethiopian traditional dresses are long with colors that represent the flag and holy embroidery. "Cultural expression to me means that I'm able to be confident in this side of my family that is not very shown to the rest of the world. It's a very strong community and it makes me feel special to be able to express it."



"Wearing cultural outfits is an expression of traditions that I am proud to celebrate. It allows me to stay connected to my culture and family, despite being far in distance. I enjoy inviting my friends to celebrate traditional events, like Sankta Lucia and Midsommar."

FROM ELVIS TO GAGA, AND POODLE SKIRTS TO GRAPHIC TEES

BY KRISSY KOH & DHIARA BERKLEY DESIGN BY IRENE ASTITHA

Pop culture, also known as popular culture, was originally created in the 1900s to organize social classes, as "pop culture" was used to describe lower classes and the term "official culture" was reserved for the upper class. Since then, pop culture has evolved and now encompasses elements of fashion, music, sports, entertainment, and ideas for all that are transported through mass media.

New genres have arisen like pop, R&B, and rap music, which consists of playful, upbeat songs that stem from the music from decades before and have since grown in popularity and diversified. Iconic artists of pop music in the past include Elvis Presley and Paul Anka. Now, well-known pop artists are Ariana Grande, Harry Styles, and Lady Gaga.

Since the 1950s, several cultural eras have occurred, each decade marked with a distinct personality. Rock and Roll was a staple in the 1950s, which included artists like The Beatles and when poodle skirts were spotted everywhere. The hippie age followed in the 1960s and after that, the advent of the 1970s popularized aspects of disco. Tie dye, bell bottoms, roller skates, and high waisted pants characterized this decade. In the 1980s and 90s, artists like Madonna, Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Prince, and Britney Spears dominated the music scene, and their music is still loved today.

With the introduction of mass media, trends for fashion, music, entertainment, and all other elements of pop culture have spread exponentially, sometimes even on a global scale. These trends often play a large role in the choices of young teens, which can help form a community but also become toxic by enforcing specific interests onto a large majority with the addition of peer pressure that pushes the notion that all things popular are good, or at least acceptable. The attitude of pop culture is not always positive and questionable intentions can be covered up with humor which leads to the spread of misinformation or harmful trends, one example being the Tide Pod challenge of 2017. It was mainly spread through YouTube and ended up causing dozens of people to be seriously harmed by ingesting the poisonous laundry detergent pods. Despite the danger of this trend, it is an unerasable part of pop culture history.

Social media platforms have allowed the creation and wide spread for trends that now have the power to circulate information pervasively within minutes. There has also been an increase in the popularity of streaming services like Netflix and Disney Plus, which have in turn allowed certain pieces of entertainment in the form of shows and movies to rise. Shows like *The Office*, *Stranger Things*, and *The Mandalorian* are now a permanent part in 21st century pop culture thanks to the integration of these streaming platforms.

In addition to creating new trends, today's pop culture also appreciates and brings back former trends while adding modern taste to them. Mom jeans and scrunchies from the '90s, chunky sneakers and denim from the '80s, and flared pants from the '70s, have been revived recently and are once again a part of popular fashion.

All over the world, pop culture has had a large influence on societies and people, and can help make positive change in communities which is a characteristic found from decades before as well. Protestors in Hong Kong used memes to help attract the attention of their cause to a global audience and this energy in raising awareness is one found in feminist movements, racial injustice protests, and climate change campaigns. Some have used posters with Star Wars, Marvel, and other pop culture references to relate and rally the audience to stand up for their cause.

Pop culture, though it has evolved throughout the time periods, current attitudes, fashion styles, music tastes, and entertaining trends all have roots in previous forms of this culture due to its huge impact on the lives of the people who participate in it which influences society as a whole.

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